

PETER A. DeFAZIO
4TH DISTRICT, OREGON

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
April 12, 2002

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

- ☐ 2134 RAYBURN HOUSE OFC. BLDG.
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3704
(202) 225-6416
- ☐ 151 WEST 7TH AVE. #400
EUGENE, OR 97401-2649
(541) 465-6732
1-800-944-9603
- ☐ 125 CENTRAL AVE. #350
COOS BAY, OR 97420
(541) 269-2609
- ☐ 612 SE JACKSON ST. #9
ROSEBURG, OR 97470
(541) 440-3523
- ☐ www.house.gov/defazio/

The Honorable Dale Bosworth
Chief of the Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
201 14th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Chief Bosworth:

I understand that the Administration is planning to make substantial changes to the Northwest Forest Plan (NFP). At our meeting last June, I outlined my concerns with the NFP and laid out my vision for management of westside forests in the Pacific Northwest—the same strategy for the management of these forests that I have been advocating for a decade. For your information, I have enclosed copies of my previous letters to you and former Chief Mike Dombeck on this issue.

As you may remember from our discussion, I believe it is possible to construct a management plan for Northwest forests that would protect all the remaining old growth and generate more timber volume through restoration forestry that targets the huge backlog of thinning on millions of acres of overstocked stands. Litigation and direct action by environmental groups has essentially ended the logging of old growth on federal forestlands. By finally ending the old growth debate through permanent protection, the Forest Service could free up significant resources that could be used to conduct non-controversial restoration forestry. The goal of restoration forestry is to develop healthy forests and species habitat, but substantial timber volume could result from restoration activities. Some experts have estimated that between 200 and 500 million board feet a year is possible by using an accelerated thinning strategy in Northwest forests. That type of volume would be invaluable to the economically depressed timber towns in the Northwest—many of which are currently facing unemployment rates over 10 percent.

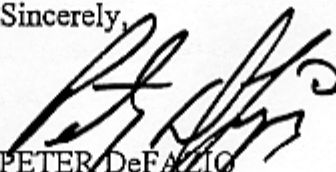
The Bush Administration does not enjoy strong support in the environmental community. However, the Administration and the Forest Service have an opportunity to bring environmentalists and industry together on this issue to do something positive for the environment and timber communities in the Northwest. I fear some in the Administration, and a minority in the industry, are advocating a return to the timber policies of the 1980s. The only result of that course of action will be years of continued gridlock that will hurt Northwest forests and communities.

One of the great fallacies of the NFP was President Clinton's belief that he could secretly design a successful management plan for 14 national forests. To its detriment, his plan was not open to public review and comment. Any revisions to the NFP must be in full compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). An open process is the only way to ensure some level of public confidence in whatever changes you might make to the NFP.

I strongly urge you to recognize the mistakes of the Clinton Administration so you do not repeat them. The proposal I made a decade ago is needed even more so today. For me to consider any changes in the NFP a success, the plan would have to protect the remaining old growth; do the necessary thinning in the Matrix and Late Successional Reserves; and make the entire process open to the public for review and comment.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

Enclosures